⊗ [Since being ejected from the NAACP for his independent and militant stand against racial injustice.]
+ [Discontinued due to lack of funds.]
* [Williams is exiled on Cuba.]

THE SITUATION IN MONROE, N.C.

A NEW YORK FREEDOM RIDER AND TWO NEGRO RESIDENTS OF MONROE, N.C., ARE IN PRISON ON CHARGES OF KIDNAPPING. INDICTMENTS ON THE SAME CHARGE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT AGAINST ROBERT F. WILLIAMS, MILITANT NEGRO LEADER OF THAT CITY, WHO IS PRESIDENT OF THE UNION COUNTY BRANCH OF THE NAACP, ⊗ AND AGAINST MAE MALLORY, A NEW YORK SUPPORTER OF WILLIAMS' NEWSLETTER, THE CRUSADER, + WHO WAS VISITING HIM IN MONROE. THE PENALTY FOR KIDNAPPING IN NORTH CAROLINA IS LIFE IMPRISONMENT. THE FBI, ON THE PRESUMPTION THAT WILLIAMS AND MALLORY HAVE LEFT THE STATE, ARE CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE MANHUNT ON FEDERAL WARRANTS OF FLEEING ACROSS STATE LINES TO ESCAPE PROSECUTION. *

ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE KIDNAP CHARGES, AS WELL AS LESSER CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THE FREEDOM RIDERS, MEMBERS OF THE MONROE NON-VIOLENT ACTION COM. AS WELL AS UNAFFILIATED COLORED RESIDENTS OF MONROE, ARE FRAME-UPS.

THE EVENTS ON WHICH ALL OF THESE CHARGES ARE BASED TOOK PLACE DURING AND AFTER A POLICE-ENCOURAGED RIOT ON AUG. 27 BY TWO TO FIVE THOUSAND WHITES AGAINST AN ANTI-SEGREGATION PICKET LINE IN THE COURT HOUSE SQUARE.

THE RIOTING MARKED THE CULMINATION OF A WEEK OF WHITE-SUPREMACIST HOODLUMISM AGAINST THE PICKETS. THROUGHOUT THE WEEK POLICE HAD REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO ARREST THOSE WHO ASSAULTED THE PICKETS. REPEATED REPRESENTATIONS HAD BEEN MADE TO THE CITY, STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS SITUATION IN MONROE AND PROTECTION ASKED. ALL THIS WAS TO NO AVAIL.

DURING THE AUG. 27 RIOTING, PICKETS, MNVAC MEMBERS AND OTHERS WENT INTO THE POLICE STATION FOR PROTECTION FROM THE MOB WHICH REMAINED OUTSIDE THREATENING FOR HOURS. WHILE THERE THEY WERE PLACED UNDER ARREST AFTER THE POLICE CHIEF HAD ENGAGED IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE MAN WHO IS GENERALLY REPUTED TO BE THE HEAD OF THE KLU KLUX KLAN IN MONROE.

NEW TOWN, THE MAIN NEGRO NEIGHBORHOOD OF MONROE, WAS IN A STATE OF ALARM AND PANIC. SOME RESIDENTS WHO HAD RETURNED FROM THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT HAD BEEN BEATEN AND CHASED BY WHITES WHO THREW STONES AND SHOT AT THEM. IT WAS FEARED THAT THE PRISONERS WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE MOB, OR TURNED OVER BY THE POLICE TO THEM, AND LYNCHED.

AS A RESULT OF PAST INCURSIONS BY KKK MOTORCADES, SHOOTING, INDISCRIMINATELY, THE RESIDENTS OF NEW TOWN HAD ARMED THEMSELVES FOR SELF-DEFENSE AND HAD ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ENGAGED IN SELF-DEFENSE. ON THIS NIGHT AN INVASION BY A MOTORCADE WAS EXPECTED MOMENTARILY. MANY NEGROES NOT FROM THAT NEIGHBORHOOD AND MANY RURAL NEGROES, BECAUSE OF THE RIOTING DOWNTOWN AND RUMORS OF KKK PLANS, HAD CROWDED INTO NEW TOWN FOR PROTECTION.

THE STEGALLS, A WHITE COUPLE FROM A NEARBY TOWN, HAVE TOLD THE PRESS THAT, SEEKING TO AVOID THE JAM CAUSED BY THE RIOTING, THEY DROVE INTO NEW TOWN. THEY WERE STOPPED BY AN EXCITED CROWD AND TAKEN INTO WILLIAMS' HOME. THERE WERE CRIES OF "KILL THEM! KILL THEM!" WILLIAMS ARGUED IN VAIN WITH THE CROWD TO SET THEM FREE. A WOMAN IN THE CROWD SHOUTED THREATS TO WILLIAMS THAT IF HE TURNED THEM LOOSE, THE CROWD WOULD KILL HIM AND THE WHITE COUPLE AS WELL.

EVEN IN INTERVIEWS WITH NORTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS AFTER SHE AND HER HUSBAND HAD CONFERRED WITH UNION COUNTY POLICE OFFICIALS, MRS. STEGALL ADMITTED THAT WILLIAMS HAD CHIDED THE CROWD, HAD HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ALLEGED TYING OF THEIR HANDS. "THEY WERE EXPECTING SOMEBODY TO COME AFTER THEM, AND THEY WERE ALL READY. I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY GUNS IN MY LIFE," MRS. STEGALL TOLD THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER IN AN INTERVIEW PRINTED AUG. 29. "WILLIAMS, HE MADE OUT

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LIKE HE WANTED TO LET US GO. HE ACTED LIKE HE WANTED TO BE NICE TO US. BUT HE SAID IF HE LET US GO THE MOB OUTSIDE WOULD KILL US. SOMEBODY KEPT YELLING, 'LET ME KILL THEM. LET ME KILL THEM.'"

IN ANOTHER STORY IN THE SAME ISSUE OF THE PAPER MRS. STEGALL IS QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: "HE [WILLIAMS] TOLD US HE COULDN'T LET US GO BECAUSE THE MOB OUTSIDE 'WOULD JUST GET YOU, AND I CAN'T DO A THING.'"

SHORTLY BEFORE THE STEGALLS DROVE ON TO N. BOYTE ST., THE THRONG HAD WANTED TO HOLD A WHITE HIGHWAY PATROLMAN WHO HAD DRIVEN UP TO SPEAK TO WILLIAMS. WILLIAMS HAD SUCCESSFULLY DISSUADED THE EXCITED CROWD AND THE HIGHWAY PATROLMAN, ON HIS ADVICE, HAD MADE A SPEEDY EXIT. AT THIS POINT, IT IS RELIABLY REPORTED, WILLIAMS WENT INTO HIS HOUSE TO PHONE POLICE CHIEF A. A. MAUNEY. HE WAS ENGAGED IN THIS ATTEMPT WHEN THE STEGALLS WERE STOPPED IN FRONT OF HIS HOUSE. THE CROWD HAD ALREADY BROUGHT THEM INTO HIS FRONT YARD WHEN, ATTRACTED BY THE NOISE, HE CAME OUT.

IT IS ALSO REPORTED THAT AFTER HE HAD FAILED TO PERSUADE THE CROWD TO LET THE WHITE COUPLE GO ON THEIR WAY, HE HAD EXPLAINED TO MR. STEGALL THE CROWD'S FEARS ABOUT THE FATE OF THOSE IN THE POLICE STATION AND THE EXPECTED INVASION BY THE KLAN. WILLIAMS THEN ASKED MR. STEGALL IF HE WOULD GET ON THE PHONE AND USE WHAT INFLUENCE HE HAD WITH THE CITY AUTHORITIES. BUT MRS. STEGALL INTERJECTED THAT SHE WOULD CALL AND SEE WHAT SHE COULD DO.

WILLIAMS IS A FUGITIVE AND HIS SIDE OF THE STORY HAS NOT YET BEEN HEARD. IT IS REPORTED WILLIAMS SPOKE WITH POLICE CHIEF MAUNEY AND THEN PUT MR. STEGALL ON THE PHONE. THE STORY GIVEN OUT BY MAUNEY IS THAT WILLIAMS SAID TWO WHITE PEOPLE WERE HOSTAGES AND WOULD BE KILLED UNLESS THE FREEDOM RIDERS AND LOCAL NEGRO PICKETS WERE RELEASED. IN MAUNEY'S ACCOUNT IT IS MADE OUT THAT WILLIAMS WAS HOLDING THE COUPLE HOSTAGE AND THREATENED TO KILL THEM. KNOWLEDGE OF WILLIAMS' CHARACTER AND HIS BEHAVIOR DURING THE EVENTS OF THE HECTIC WEEK INDICATE THAT MAUNEY IS TWISTING A DESCRIPTION BY WILLIAMS OF THE CROWD'S MOOD AND DEMANDS INTO THREATS BY WILLIAMS TO MAKE HIM LIABLE TO A KIDNAPPING CHARGE.

A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO HOURS LATER, AFTER WILLIAMS HAD SUCCEEDED IN CALMING DOWN THE CROWD, THE COUPLE WAS ABLE TO DRIVE OFF UNHARMED.

CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS ARE THAT THE STEGALLS' CAR, WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET, WAS MOVED INTO A DRIVEWAY OR ALLEY BY WHITE YOUTH. SINCE THE ONLY WHITES WHO COULD MOVE FREELY IN NEW TOWN AT THE HEIGHT OF THE EXCITEMENT WERE THE YOUNG FREEDOM RIDERS, WHO HAD BEEN LIVING THERE FOR A WEEK, THE PRESUMPTION IS THAT A FREEDOM RIDER MAY HAVE MOVED THE STEGALLS' CAR. APPARENTLY POLICE HAVE CHOSEN ROBERT LOWRY, A FREEDOM RIDER FROM NEW YORK, TO FIT THIS ROLE AND HAVE THEREBY INDICTED HIM FOR COMPLICITY IN KIDNAPPING.

A POLICEMAN WAS SHOT IN THE LEG ALLEGEDLY BY A NEGRO. THIS APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE IN THE RAILROAD YARD WHERE POLICE AND WHITE CIVILIANS WERE SEEN CHASING AND SHOOTING AT NEGRO MEN. A 17-YEAR OLD NEGRO BOY HAS BEEN ARRESTED ON THIS CHARGE THOUGH RESIDENTS OF MONROE STATE THAT HE WAS NOWHERE NEAR THE SCENE AT THE TIME.

FREEDOM RIDERS, MNVAC MEMBERS AND NEGROES, WHO HAD ENTERED THE POLICE STATION FOR PROTECTION OR TO INQUIRE ABOUT RELATIVES WHO HAD BEEN BEATEN AND ARRESTED, WERE HELD INCOMMUNICADO FOR TWO DAYS. THEY WERE CONVICTED IN A MASS TRIAL OF "INCITING TO RIOT" ON NO EVIDENCE OTHER THAN THAT THEY HAD ENGAGED IN PICKETING (WHICH IS PERFECTLY LEGAL IN NORTH CAROLINA). FINES AND SENTENCES UP TO TWO YEARS WERE METED OUT TO THE FREEDOM RIDERS AND SUSPENDED IN AN OBVIOUS MOVE TO RID MONROE OF THEIR PRESENCE.

AT LEAST ONE PRISONER WAS BADLY BEATEN IN JAIL. FREEDOM RIDER RICHARD GRISWOLD WAS PUT IN A CELL WITH AN EXTREMELY VIOLENT, INTEGRATIONIST-HATING PRISONER. WHEN A FELLOW FREEDOM RIDER, KEN SHILMAN, WAS BEING CONDUCTED TO A CELL IN THE SAME AREA OF THE PRISON HE HEARD SCREAMS FROM THE FIRST CELL AND SAW A FIGURE BLEEDING FROM THE EYES, HIS NOSE BROKEN, FACE COVERED WITH BLOOD. HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM AS GRISWOLD UNTIL THE LATTER MANAGED TO GASP OUT HIS NAME. SHILMAN DEMANDED AND SECURED THE TRANSFER OF GRISWOLD FROM THAT CELL BEFORE HE WAS KILLED. THE WHITE PRISONER WHO DID THE BEATING LATER BOASTED TO THEM THAT HE HAD BEEN PROMISED BEFOREHAND A FREEDOM RIDER TO BEAT UP. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE FINE WOULD BE $15.00 AT THE MOST AND THAT SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD PAY IT. HE COMPLAINED THAT HE HAD ALSO BEEN PROMISED A KNIFE BUT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN IT.

MALTREATMENT OF THE WOMEN PRISONERS INCLUDED PUTTING FIVE IN A CELL WITH ONLY THREE COTS WHILE UNUSED COTS WERE PLAINLY VISIBLE BEYOND THE BARS. MOREOVER, THE PRISONERS WERE NOT GIVEN ANY FOOD TILL MIDDAY FOLLOWING THE DAY OF THEIR ARREST.

MONROE AND UNION COUNTY HAVE A LONG RECORD OF RACIAL INJUSTICE. IT IS SAID TO BE THE SITE OF THE SOUTHEASTERN HEADQUARTERS OF THE KLU KLUX KLAN. HUGE KKK RALLIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE AREA.

IN 1957 THE KKK WARNED DR. A. E. PERRY, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL NAACP, THAT IT WAS COMING TO GET HIM. PERRY, ALONG WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE NEGRO COMMUNITY, HAD BEEN PROMINENT IN PETITIONING THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SWIMMING POOL IN THE NEGRO SECTION OF TOWN. MONROE'S ONLY SWIMMING POOL, BUILT WITH FEDERAL FUNDS AND MUNICIPALLY MAINTAINED, IS FOR WHITES ONLY.

ROBERT F. WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL NAACP, ORGANIZED A DEFENSE SQUAD TO STAND GUARD AROUND PERRY'S HOME FROM DUSK TO DAWN. WHEN A KKK MOTORCADE ADVANCED ON PERRY'S HOUSE, IT WAS DRIVEN OFF WITH GUN FIRE. THIS PRECEDED BY A FEW MONTHS, AND PROBABLY INSPIRED, THE WIDELY PUBLICIZED DRIVING OFF OF THE KLAN BY THE INDIANS IN ROBESON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA.

MONROE WAS THE SCENE IN 1958 OF THE NOTORIOUS "KISSING CASE" IN WHICH TWO NEGRO BOYS AGED EIGHT AND NINE WERE THROWN INTO THE CITY JAIL AND THEN SENTENCED TO THE REFORMATORY ON A CHARGE THAT ONE OF THEM HAD INDUCED A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD WHITE GIRL TO KISS HIM. ROBERT F. WILLIAMS TOOK THE LEAD IN CALLING THIS CASE TO PUBLIC ATTENTION AND FIGHTING FOR THE BOYS' RELEASE.

WILLIAMS HAS UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIED TO ENTER HIS TWO CHILDREN IN MONROE'S LILY-WHITE SCHOOLS.

LAST WINTER WILLIAMS LED A GROUP OF YOUNG NEGROES IN LUNCH-COUNTER SIT-INS IN MONROE. ARRESTED AND CONVICTED, HE IS STILL APPEALING HIS CASE.

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, WILLIAMS LED A PICKET LINE AT THE MUNICIPAL SWIMMING POOL. CITY AUTHORITIES NOT ONLY REFUSED TO INTEGRATE THE POOL BUT EVEN TO SET ASIDE ONE DAY A WEEK FOR ITS USE BY COLORED TOWNSPEOPLE. (THEY CLAIM IT WOULD BE TOO EXPENSIVE SINCE THE WATER WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED AFTER EACH TIME NEGROES USED IT.) THIS WAS THE FIRST PICKET LINE EVER SEEN IN UNION COUNTY. (THERE ARE NO LABOR UNIONS IN UNION COUNTY.) THE PICKET LINE WAS REPEATEDLY THREATENED AND ATTACKED. TWO ATTEMPTS WERE MADE ON WILLIAMS' LIFE.

ALTHOUGH IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT WILLIAMS DOES NOT BELIEVE IN PACIFISM BUT RATHER IN SELF-DEFENSE WHEN NECESSARY, HE INVITED THE FREEDOM RIDERS TO MONROE. HE WAS NOT IN ANY WAY CONNECTED WITH THE MONROE NON-VIOLENT ACTION COMMITTEE WHICH THE FREEDOM RIDERS FORMED WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS. HE DID NOT ATTEND ITS MEETINGS NOR PARTICIPATE IN ITS PICKET LINES. DURING THE WEEK OF THEIR PICKETING HE REFRAINED

AT LEAST ONE PRISONER WAS FREED BEFORE IN 1811. FREEDOM RIDER RICHARD GRIGWOLD WAS PUT IN A CELL WITH AN EXTREMELY VIOLENT, INTEGRATIONIST-HATING PRISONER. WHEN A FELLOW FREEDOM RIDER, KEN SHILMAN, WAS BEING CONDUCTED TO A CELL IN THE SAME AREA OF THE PRISON HE HEARD SCREAMS FROM THE FIRST CELL AND SAW A FIGHT BREAKING FROM THE EYES. HIS NOSE BROKEN, FACE COVERED WITH BLOOD, HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM AS GRIGWOLD UNTIL THE LATTER MANAGED TO GASP OUT HIS NAME. SHILMAN DEMANDED AND SECURED THE TRANSFER OF GRIGWOLD FROM THAT CELL BEFORE HE WAS KILLED. THE WHITE PRISONER WHO DID THE BEATING LATER BOASTED TO SHILMAN THAT HE HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BEFORENAND A FREEDOM RIDER TO BEAT UP. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE KING WOULD BE $15.00 AT THE MOST AND THAT SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD PAY IT. HE CONTEMPLATED THAT HE HAD ALSO BEEN PROMISED A KNIFE BUT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN IT.

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FROM GOING DOWNTOWN LEST HIS PRESENCE SERVE AS AN EXCUSE FOR VIOLENCE. HE URGED PEOPLE TO RESPECT THE NON-VIOLENT ACTION AND TO COOPERATE WITH THE PICKETS BY OBSERVING THEIR RULES AND REGULATIONS.

NONE OF THE FREEDOM RIDERS WHO WENT TO MONROE HAVE ONE WORD OF CRITICISM OF WILLIAMS' CONDUCT DURING THE TIME THEY WERE THERE. THEY ARE UNANIMOUS IN STATING THAT WILLIAMS IN NO WAY CAUSED THE VIOLENCE BUT THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT RESTS SOLELY ON THE MONROE POLICE AND CITY AUTHORITIES. THEY ALSO STATE THEIR BELIEF THAT THE RACIST ELEMENTS, WHICH ARE SO POWERFUL IN THAT COUNTY, WILL GO TO ANY LENGTHS OF FRAME-UP OR VIOLENCE AGAINST WILLIAMS, WHO IS THE UNDISPUTED LEADER OF THAT AREA'S MILITANT ANTI-JIM CROW FORCES.

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